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ABSTRACT

The paper describes a secondary level American Studies unit on U.S. foreign policy. The interdisciplinary approach of American studies focuses on the interrelationships of social science, language arts, fine arts, and natural sciences that shape American culture. The four-week unit on foreign policy was taught in a two-hour time block. Students received credit for both social studies and English. Four topics comprise the unit: Function, in which students define foreign policy in terms of who makes it and how it works; Factors, in which past and present contributions to foreign policy are considered; Forces, the study of the determinants of foreign policy such as missionaries, businessmen, politicians, and entertainers; and Forecast, an examination of our foreign policy toward current world situations. A sample lesson on the missionary role in foreign policy is included. (KC)

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The American Studies:
A Model Unit -- "United States Foreign Policy"

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Introduction

One of the major objectives of the social studies teacher is to have students become more aware of their social world and how they relate to this world. For this objective to become a reality, the teacher must guard against the possibility of the subject matter taught becoming fragmented. When there is fragmentation of knowledge, the students tend to view the parts of their world as being "strange and isolated" from each other. It is very easy to teach in such a manner that military historical events are separated from the social world in which they occur, political events are separated from the literature of the time, artistic productions being isolated from the social world which created them, as well as many other segments of one's social world occuring in isolation. The American studies concept is one attempt to bring about a unification of these diverse elements of the social world.

The basic goal of the American studies is to help students recognize and define the inter-relationships that have shaped, and are shaping, the American culture. It is recognized that there is an ever increasing complexity in the relationship of those factors affecting the American culture. The American studies program hopes that the student will be able to see

relationships in this complexity and gain some understanding of the inter-relationships by exploring certain dominant themes that are found in our culture--both past and present. In examing these dominant themes the subject matter of social sciences, language arts, fine arts, and natural sciences are attempted to be inter-related in the study of one particular dominant theme as this theme is studied throughout the time scope of history.

For five weeks during the summer of 1979, a group of high school teachers concerned with the American studies concept met at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. This group was composed of one teacher from each of the states east of the Mississippi River. For the last week of this five-week period, a school administrator and a college instructor from each of these states joined the group of teachers. Each state team was given the responsibility of developing a teacher unit which represented the unifying principles of American studies. This unit was designed as one that could be implemented in the school where the high school teacher would be teaching in 1979-1980. Also, the unit was designed as a model which could be used by teachers in other schools.

The team from the State of Georgia developed a unit dealing with American foreign policy as their model unit to incorporate the unifying principles of American studies. In the fall of 1979, this unit was taught at Mt. Zion High School at Mt. Zion, Georgia. Mt. Zion High School draws its students from rural areas in Carroll County, a west Georgia county adjacent to Alabama. The unit was taught to a senior class. This class, meeting for a two-hour time block, had a humanities approach in which the students earned both a credit in social studies and a credit in English. A team teaching approach was used. The two teachers who composed the team had been teaching as a team for ten years. One teacher of the team had a history and art background while the other member of the

team had an English and political science background.

The basic texts used for the entire humanities course were:

Jones, Stephen G., and Marion Murphy, Geography and World Affairs, Rand McNally and Co., Chicago, 1976.

Miller, James, Robert Hayden, and Robert O'Neal, The United States in Literature, Scott, Foresman and Co., New York: 1973.

Mussy, David and Arthur Link, Our Country's History, Ginn and Co., Atlanta, 1965.

Porter, Andres and Henry J. Terrie, American Literature, Ginn and Company, 1976.

Shafer, Boyd Co., R. A. McLemore, and Everett Augspurger, A High School History of Modern America, Laidlaw Brothers, Atlanta, 1969.

While the unit was taught in a relatively small, rural high school where a team teaching approach was used, its principles could be adopted in any high school. It could also be adapted to be taught by a single teacher having a one-period time block.

American Foreign Policy Unit

There were a number of reasons why a unit in American foreign policy was chosen as the subject matter for implementing the concepts of the American studies program. While foreign policy is often difficult for high school students to grasp, it does have immediate importance to students. However, many high school students indicate that foreign policy seems so removed from their immediate life, and to them it seems totally irrevelant. It is difficult for these students to visualize a future more than six months ahead and one which includes something other than their own small world.

Also, in any senior class there are some students whose newly awakened social conscience leads them to seek a short cut to "heaven on earth." Often one's opinion of foreign policy is a reflection of one's personal character and temperment rather than thoughtful, considered responses based on adequate knowledge. It was hoped that the unit on foreign policy would lead to some student ability to analyze political and social processes. Also, it was hoped that the students would make some value judgments concerning America's foreign policy and would clarify their own values.

In planning the schedule for the unit, four topics were developed. Planned for the first three days of the unit was the topic of FUNCTION. Here the class looked at foreign policy by considering such topics as: What is foreign policy? Who makes foreign policy? How does foreign policy work? The next three days were spent on the idea of FACTORS. Here the class studied what had contributed to our foreign policy in the past and what was contributing to it and influencing it today. The longest period of time, two weeks, was given to the idea of FORCES. Here the class studied who are the determinants of our foreign policy. Groups that have influences on our foreign policy such as missionaries, businessmen, military persons, politicians, and entertainers were introduced. Some of these groups, especially the missionary, were studied in depth. The last topic was FORECAST. Four days were given to this topic. Here the class looked at where were the "hot spots" today and who is involved in the "Cold War." A study was made of current situations and our foreign policy toward these situations with some emphasis on what could happen in the future.

These were the four topics used in the four-week study. However, they should not be seen as rigid time elements as was done in this presentation.

At another time with another group, the teaching team felt they would make some adjustments. The number of days were determined by the amount of reinforcement needed to reach the short-term objectives. A syllabus for the entire unit was given to the students with some of the dates listed. These dates were all subject to amendment. Amendments were made on a weekly basis. Although the time element of the unit was historically a long time, from the colonial relationship with the American Indians to the present, the focus was on the factors, forces, and people who had made contributions to our foreign policy. This made the unit manageable for a four-week time period.

Three paperback books were read by the students during the unit. These were: (1) The Ugly American by William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, (2) Animal Farm by George Orwell, and (3) Athem by Ayn Rand. The class was divided into three groups with each group reading one of the three books. The groups reported to the class on the particular book which they had read. The teachers' goal was to stimulate interest in each student so that each student would want to read all three books. This stimulation was attempted to be achieved as the teachers interacted with the class members reporting on their particular book. This goal of stimulating interest was particularly achieved with The Ugly American. Many members of the class read this book.

Sample Lesson: The Missionary Role or "Messiah Complex" in Foreign Policy

In order to demonstrate how there could be developed the unifying principles of the American studies program, the following lessons concerning the missionary role in foreign policy is presented. These lessons were planned for five days.

On the first day, students were introduced to the topic and were requested to bring any art object they could find that was brought from a foreign culture by a missionary. A surprisingly large number of students were able to find these objects. Artifacts brought to the class included dolls, dishes, combs, fans, silk fabrics, napkins, currency, and pictures. The class then theorized on the relationship of the artifact to the work and travel of the missionaries. As this was done, there was a tracing of the movement of the missionaries from their beginning work with the American Indians to President Carter's Human Rights Program. Slides were shown illustrating various places Christian missionaries travelled and the variety of work in which they were involved. The slides used were:

1. etching - Pilgrims leaving Holland for America, 1620.
2. etching - Religious Refugees (Eviction of a Huguenot Family), 1685.
3. Cartoon - Puck, Christianization of Black Slaves, 1821.
4. photo - President Taft with Leaders of Japanese Government and American Missionaries, 1907.
5. photo - Chinese Village made by Early American Missionaries.
6. photo - Spanish Mission, San Antonia, Texas.
7. photo - Sod House.
8. drawing - American Indians Talking with Missionaries, Farming Scene.
9. painting - Early Spanish Mission with many Indians Around it.
10. photo - Russian Priest as he Arrived in Canada on World Tour, Early 1900's.
11. photo - Newspaper Story: Living By the Plow and Prayer.

12, 13, 14 & 15. photos - Magazine Article Showing Pictures and Telling Story of Captured Missionaries in Asia.

16. photo - Missionary in India.

17. photo - Missionary in Africa.

18. photo - Billy Graham.

19 & 20. photos - Liberia in Early 1900's

21. painting - Farming Scene in Africa (Missionary Help).

22. photo - Nun Helping Child Dress in Asia.

23. photo - The Cade Chois, West Point.

24. photo - Peace Corp Working in South America.

25. photo - Hands (Helping Hands of World).

Each student was given a two-page biography of a person with a mission. The students were allowed adequate reading time during the class to read the material. Some of the handouts had key sentences blocked in and key words coded. This was done to aid the slow reading student in the identification of basic facts. After the reading was completed, the class discussed the various persons and the impact these persons had on the world of their times as well as their input on our present time.

The vocabulary words for the unit included such words as: mission, crusade, Manifest Destiny, White Man's Burden, and ethnocentricity. The students were encouraged to relate the words and phrases to earlier usages in different contexts, but they were also asked to reflect on the relationship of the missionary philosophy to the events and happenings in earlier studies of American culture.

In order to include the desired map study, individual desk maps were given to each student. As the vocabulary word study was done and as the biographies of the missionaries were studied, map work was done to show where the missionaries traveled. Time was provided whereby the students

were able to walk about the room, exchange colored pens, and share the progress on mapping the missionary movements.

From the beginning of the unit, plans were made for a debate on the topic, "Religion was a hindrance in the exploration and settlement of the Americas." Two groups were selected to participate in the debate. These two groups did research in the preparation for the debate. On the last day of the lessons, the debate was held.

On the fourth day of the lessons, the students spent some time in analyzing the impact of music upon a social group. The students were asked to bring in lyrics of their favorite songs. These lyrics were analyzed as to the theme of their message. Emphasis was placed on those songs having a social protest theme. Then the students listened to a record of Bob Dylan's singing "With God on Our Side." Words of the song were handed out to the students and they followed along with the singing. Some chose to sing with the music. The next day, or last day of the lessons, the students were asked to write a one-page paper on their interpretation of Dylan's lyrics and how these related to America's "Messiah Complex."

Conclusions

The American studies concept offers one method for bringing some unity of understanding to an ever increasing diversification of those elements that shape the American culture. There are some criticisms of its concept and proposed methodology. Noteably is the fear that when units are based on one particular dominant theme as it is developed through history, the student may become confused as to the interrelated chronological time sequence of each of these themes. Certainly teachers using the American studies process must be aware of this criticism and find ways to overcome the weakness.

In the development of the foreign policies unit using the American studies concept at Mt. Zion High School, the team felt that students became personally involved in at least certain parts of the unit. They were able to see the relationship of entertainment figures, religious persons and movements, economic factors, governmental concerns, and other cultural elements to a foreign policy formation. They seemed to be able to relate many facets of the present and past American culture to the immediate foreign policy problems--in the fall of 1979 this being the United States' hostages in Iran. The team recommends that many teachers develop units encompassing the unifying principles of the American studies concepts.